

Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
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Senate
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25 August 2021

Dear Minister,

Recognition of the National Unity Government (NUG) of Myanmar at the 75th UN General Assembly

Further to our correspondence of 24 May regarding Myanmar's credentials at the 109th International Labour Conference (ILC), the situation in Myanmar has worsened considerably, with over 1000 people now killed by the junta. The repression of trade unionists has escalated, with the General Secretary of the Myanmar Industry Craft and Service-Trade Unions Federation (MICS-TUsF), Thet Hnin Aung, arrested on 13 July. The military junta has dismissed 300,000 workers for joining the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), and over 175,000 persons have been displaced. The coup and the third wave of COVID-19 have led to more than 25 million people now living in absolute poverty. Despite the arms embargo led by some countries, the military is still financed to buy ammunition to kill civilians instead of purchasing COVID-19 vaccines for the people.

The international community must take urgent action against the military coup to end the human rights catastrophe in Myanmar. The global trade union movement calls on the international community to recognise the National Unity Government (NUG), established on 16 April by the parliamentarians elected in the 8th November 2020 elections, ethnic representatives, and civil society activists. The Myanmar Labour Alliance, which includes the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar (CTUM) and 16 trade unions and labour organisations, supports the NUG in its effort to build the governance structure and peace framework for a democratic federal Myanmar.

Although we have seen strong resolutions calling for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar at the ILC, the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council, the NUG has yet to be recognised at the international level.

The 109th International Labour Conference (ILC) received two sets of credentials – one from the military junta (the State Administration Council), and one from the NUG. The ILC blocked the military junta from representing the state of Myanmar, in alignment with the interim decisions of the 73rd and 74th UN General Assemblies (UNGA), the 74th World Health Assembly, and the 42nd Conference of the Food and Agricultural Organisation. However, the decision on who will represent the state of Myanmar has been referred to the 75th UNGA in September.

We urge the Australian Government to support the call of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar to officially recognise the NUG at the UNGA, and impose a global arms embargo on Myanmar. Recognition of the NUG by individual Governments worldwide, and at the UNGA in particular, is crucial in order to mount pressure on the military junta to stop the violent repression of the people, to return power to the democratically elected civilian Government, to facilitate access to the humanitarian aid inside Myanmar, to resolve the Rohingya issue, and to state firm support of the will of the people of Myanmar.

In addition to supporting the recognition of the NUG at the UNGA, we urge you to recognise the NUG at the bilateral level as the sole legitimate representatives of Myanmar, in order to support a return to democratic rule in Myanmar.

The Australian Union movement stands in solidarity with the people of Myanmar and looks forward to the Australian Government taking strong and urgent action to support a return to democracy. I would appreciate your response to the issues raised in this correspondence.

Yours sincerely



Michele O'Neil
President
ACTU